



George
LeMieux
U.S. Senator *for* Florida

E- NEWSLETTER

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It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your United States Senator. Thank you for subscribing to my weekly email update - a brief summary of some of the more notable events during the last seven days. I hope you'll find this useful and informative. You can also follow my regular updates from Florida and

Washington via Twitter and Facebook.



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<http://LeMieux.Senate.gov>

Haiti

Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Haiti and all the members of Florida's Haitian-American community following the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck near the capital city of Port-au-Prince. The devastation - in terms of lives lost and infrastructure - is nothing short of catastrophic.

As the United States and international community provide disaster relief, Florida plays a key role providing rescue workers, food, water, and medical supplies, and operating as a staging site for military and civilian assistance. In the immediate aftermath, I visited with leaders of local disaster relief organizations, Coast Guard officials, and members of Miami's Haitian Community who worked around the clock to ensure the Haitian people would receive assistance.



I am proud of our Governor, the military, our Coast Guard, our Florida based search and rescue teams and USAID for acting swiftly to prepare and coordinate response efforts. In the U.S. Senate, I am working to ensure donations are tax-free and that emergency operations proceed without obstacle.

If you need help with an issue related to Haiti, please contact our office toll free within Florida at (866) 630-7106.

Protecting Florida Jobs

Last week I had the privilege of traveling our great state, driving hundreds of miles and meeting with people from Pensacola, to Tallahassee, to Cape Coral, to Miami. We talked about the economy, what can be done to protect Florida's jobs, and ways we can create new opportunities for those looking for a new or better job.

One message I heard loud and clear in Panama City was opposition to the federal government's effort to take over the entire college student loan program. Such a move would eliminate good paying private sector jobs across the nation, including more than 700 at the Sallie Mae facility in Panama City. The federal government should not take over where the private sector is already succeeding in providing a good service.

Last week I visited with Sallie Mae to discuss this effort. In speaking with some of the men and women whose jobs are at stake, I made clear my support for a solution that protects these private sector jobs in a fiscally prudent way. I believe competition in the student loan marketplace gives families choices to help their

companies such as Sallie Mae continue to provide jobs for Floridians.



Florida's Military Bases

Last week I visited four Northwest Florida military installations - Pensacola Naval Air Station, Eglin Air Force Base, Hulbert Field and Tyndall Air Force Base - to discuss national security issues and address the current and future needs of our forces. Our service men and women face unique challenges and I appreciated hearing their views on issues affecting their communities.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I will continue to ensure our military installations receive enhanced resources to meet the needs of our service men and women today and the requirements for meeting the emerging threats of tomorrow.



Lee County VA Outpatient Clinic Groundbreaking

Last Thursday veterans and local officials in Lee County broke ground on the construction of a new Veterans Outpatient Clinic. When complete, this 220,000 square foot VA facility will help serve the needs of more than 202,000 veterans in Southwest Florida.

I am proud to work on behalf of the nearly 1.8 million veterans who live in Florida. Our service members put their lives on the line for our freedom and security. Our country has an obligation to keep its promise to provide quality health care for our veterans.

The Department of Defense needs to continue to work closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs in crafting and implementing policies and processes to ensure seamless care and transition for our wounded warriors and their families. It is also essential that the Department continue to focus on supporting all of our service members, not only those who are injured or ill, but also their families, as they face the numerous challenges associated with lengthy and frequent deployments.



The Direction of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America

This past Friday I visited Florida International University School of Law to talk about the direction of U.S. policy as it relates to Latin America. I discussed the importance of promoting economic as well as political freedoms throughout the Western Hemisphere.

No other state has a more vested interest in a peaceful and democratic relationship with the countries of Latin America than Florida. As the Gateway to the Americas, Florida relies on strong ties for tourism and trade in goods and services. In addition, our diverse population has a great deal of family and friends who live in Latin America.

Economically, Florida relies on many countries within the region as trading partners. Nearly 1 in 6 jobs in Florida depend on international business. More than 33,000 companies - 95 percent of which are small and mid-sized businesses - export goods from our 14 deepwater ports.

But our nation's foreign policy must go beyond trade. The United States must continue to promote policies that protect the inalienable rights of people. I believe these rights must include free and fair elections, private property rights, and freedom of speech. No matter which party controls Congress or the White House, liberty, freedom, and the rule of law - the backbone of American society - must continue to be our overarching message.

Floridians Impacted by Defective Drywall

A person's home is often their biggest lifetime investment. Unfortunately, some homes in Florida were built in recent years with contaminated drywall. The

emanating from the drywall have caused health problems and other hazards, often forcing families to move out of the premises until the drywall is replaced. Florida has 1,639 cases reported to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, making Florida the leader with 59% of all reported cases in the nation.

Last week I visited with George and Brenda Brincku and Patti and Richard Kampf, two couples that faced severe health risks and a huge financial burden because the defective product was used in the construction of their homes. Unfortunately, many other Florida families have had the same experience.



Our office is working with federal agencies to find solutions for Florida's families that have been affected by this problem. I have joined with Senator Bill Nelson in calling on mortgage companies to refrain from penalizing families financially stressed by the costs of drywall replacement and associated health problems. We are also working with the Consumer Product Safety Commission to determine the scope of the problem.

My office is hosting an informational Town Hall Meeting to discuss contaminated drywall and potential solutions for families. This meeting will be held in Naples on January 30th at 10:00am at the Lee County Commission Chambers. Representatives from Lee County, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Florida Department of Health, and the Florida Office of Insurance Regulation will be available for questions and comments related to drywall contamination ! and remediation.

A note about the Massachusetts Special Election and Health Care

Efforts

Tuesday's election results in Massachusetts sent a clear message that the American people are not happy with the way lawmakers in Washington are crafting the health care proposal. My view is voters saw problems with the content of the bill, the partisan way it was created, and that the final product did nothing to reduce health care costs and actually threatened to increase the amount Americans would pay for quality care.

It is unclear how Congressional Democrats and President Obama will proceed on health care but I hope they will start over with a more open, inclusive process that addresses the concerns of the majority of Americans. I support making quality health care more accessible to more Americans, but we ought not do it by cutting half a trillion dollars from Medicare for seniors, raising taxes, and imposing fines on Americans who decide not to buy health insurance.

Please stay tuned for further developments on the health care debate and please continue to contact me and other members of Florida's congressional delegation to let them know how you feel about the issue.

CASEWORK CORNER

One of my primary goals is to make sure Floridians are well served by Federal agencies.

Following the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti last week, our office received numerous calls from Floridians for help in locating friends and family members who had traveled to the island.

An Orlando-based church group was 20 miles west of Port-au-Prince delivering care packages assembled over the holidays when the earthquake hit. The location and health of the 44 group members was unknown. Our office contacted the U.S. State Department and United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) for assistance. The group was located on Friday. Three military and three civilian helicopters flew the missionaries to the Dominican Republic and within 24 hours they were safely returned to their families in Florida.

If you are experiencing a problem with a federal agency, please contact our Orlando Regional Office by calling (407) 254-2573 to speak with a member of the Casework Department. The toll-free number for Florida residents is (866) 630-7106. To find out more about how my office can help you, go to <http://www.house.gov/edwards>

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